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INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
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RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3423
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
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SUBJECT: PRT/HERAT: IRAN INVITES PROVINCIAL COUNCIL TO
MASHAD

¶1. (U) Members of the Herat Provincial Council participated in an Iranian version of the USG's International Visitor (IV) program when they were invited by the Iranian Government to Mashad, the nearest major Iranian city to Afghanistan. Officially, they were invited by the Islamic Council of the city and were shown economic sites in Mashad. They returned last week, after having learned more about Mashad, its municipality and projects under the city's control. Several noteworthy agreements were concluded, such as the Iranian commitment to construct a Technical and Vocational Institute in Herat for local high school graduates. The Iranian government will provide lab equipment in seven departments at the university, including food-quality testing, saffron research, and plant research. Herat University will receive five exchange professors from Mashad University for master's degree programs. Mashad University will also provide several scholarship opportunities for Afghan students for one to two years.

¶2. (U) There will be a follow-up visit shortly by another delegation from Mashad to further explore avenues of collaboration, and representatives of Mashad university, as well as vocational and technical institutes, will come to Herat. In addition, the Iranians have pledged additional assistance for the Herat university library and have already donated substantially, including hundreds of high-quality English-language textbooks.

¶3. (U) Comment: The official visits by delegations from Herat and Mashad and the promises of support are not unusual. Throughout history, these two cities have enjoyed close relations. Their proximity makes such exchanges relatively economical and easy to arrange. Large numbers of Afghans have settled in the Mashad area, including the families of prominent Herati residents. Family visits, as well as travel by Afghans seeking work or to purchase goods in this part of Iran are routine.

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